

# TRIBUTE TO VALERIE WOODRUFF

• Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I rise today in recognition of Dr. Valerie Woodruff—like me a native of West Virginia—upon her retirement as secretary of the Delaware Department of Education. Valerie, known to her many admirers in the First State as Val, has dedicated the past 43 years of her career to education and served the last 10 as Delaware's secretary of education, a position I was privileged to nominated her to when I served as Delaware's Governor from 1993–2001.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in secondary education from the Alderson Broaddus College in Philippi, WV, Val began her career in education as an English and social studies teacher at Bohemia Manor High School. She taught for 3 years before becoming a guidance counselor and beginning to work towards her master's degree.

After receiving her master's degree in 1971 from the University of Delaware in guidance and counseling, Val moved to Delaware and became a guidance counselor at Delcastle Technical High School near Wilmington. Five years later, she became the school's assistant principal. During her time at Delcastle, she also served on the Governor's Advisory Council for Career and Vocational Education.

Val worked on her doctorate degree in vocational education and curriculum development at Temple University while serving as assistant principal, then went on to become the principal at Middletown High School in 1984. She was an excellent principal, and her work did not go unnoticed. In June of 1990, she was selected as Principal of the Year by the Delaware Association of Secondary School Principals. During her watch at Middletown High School, the first school-based wellness center was established there. Today, in no small part because of her leadership, every public high school has a wellness center where students receive help and support to enable them to succeed in school and in life.

Later, Dr. Woodruff served as the associate secretary for improvement and assistance in the areas of curriculum and instruction at the department of education for 7 years. In 1999, I nominated her be secretary of education, overseeing the implementation of our State's education improvement plan which focuses on rigorous academic standards; objectively measuring student progress toward those standards; and holding schools, school districts, students, educators and parents accountable for improving student achievement. Val has emerged as a national leader among our Nation's chief school officers and has worked closely with her peers and with the U.S. Department of Education to develop and modify the Leave No Student Behind law and to narrow the achievement in Delaware and across America.

Val has a long list of accomplishments and is leaving big shoes to fill for the next secretary of education.

She is a member of many prestigious boards including the board of directors of the Council of Chief State School Officers on which she was president from 2005–2006, the Southern Regional Education Board on which she was the first K–12 educator to be elected vice-chair, and the Delaware Workforce Investment Board.

Dr. Woodruff also currently serves on the Vision 2015 Steering and Implementation Committee and is on the President's Policy Council for the Alliance for Excellent Education. In addition, she is a valued member of the Delaware Mentoring Council and of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce Partnership.

Through her tireless efforts, Valerie Woodruff has made a positive difference in the lives of tens of thousands of students in Delaware and, in doing so, has enhanced the quality of life in our State for years to come. Upon her retirement, she will leave behind a legacy of commitment to education and to public service for generations to follow. I thank her for the friendship that we share, and I congratulate her on a truly remarkable and distinguished career. In closing, on behalf of the people of Delaware, I want to wish Val and her family the very best in all that lies ahead for each of them.●

## RECOGNIZING MERCY CLINICS, INC.

• Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I wish to extend my warm congratulations to Mercy Clinics, Inc., based in Des Moines, for earning the prestigious 2008 Acclaim Award from the American Medical Group Association. This award is an extraordinary honor, given annually to the medical group that best exemplifies delivery of the highest quality health care in the United States.

Mercy Clinics, Inc. operates health care facilities throughout the greater Des Moines area, and has a long history of innovation. The 2008 Acclaim Award is just the latest national recognition of Mercy's exceptional commitment to high-quality patient care—something we deeply appreciate in Iowa.

I prize my long-standing relationship with Mercy Medical Center in Des Moines, the partner of Mercy Clinics. I will be forever grateful to the Sisters of Mercy for providing care to my chronically ill father, many years ago, at a time when my family could not afford the costs of hospitalization. He received not only quality medical attention at Mercy, but also a generous measure of caring and kindness that remain the signature of Mercy Medical Center and Mercy Clinics to this day. The way that Mercy has retained these traditional human factors while providing state-of-the-art, 21st century clinical practice is obviously a winning formula—indeed, an award-winning formula.

In presenting the award, the American Medical Group Association cited

Mercy Clinics' pioneering research into the best ways to care for people with chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. The staff at Mercy Clinics created a program called "Medical Home," which includes a team of "Health Coaches" who review patients' medical records and provide ongoing support for patients both face-to-face and over the phone, including advice on nutrition, exercise, and treatment management. Outcomes showed significant improvement in patient blood sugar and blood pressure control.

I salute the visionary leadership of Dr. David Swieskowski, vice president for quality improvement for Mercy Clinics along with the partners who collaborated to make this project, not only successful, but a national award winner: Wellmark Blue Cross/Blue Shield provided grant funding to hire the first health coaches and whose "pay for performance" program rewards population based care; the Iowa Foundation for Medical Care who provided the Care Measures Disease Registry; Des Moines University who collaborated on health coach education and certification; Pfizer who provided initial health coach training in patient self-management support; the Institute for Healthcare Improvement whose IMPACT program model helped Mercy Clinics shape their program; and New Health Partnerships who also provided grant assistance. I also commend the commitment to quality and excellence that pervades the entire family of Mercy health care professionals.

I congratulate all of them for a job well done. I look forward to working with them—and benefiting from their counsel—as the new 111th Congress addresses health care reform, with a strong emphasis on wellness and prevention.●

## TRIBUTE TO JOHN J. LEONE, JR.

• Mr. LIEBERMAN. Madam President, today I wish to honor Mr. John J. Leone, Jr. of Bristol, CT. A dedicated public servant who has served his community for over 40 years, John will retire from his position as president and CEO of the Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce at the end of the year.

John has been head of the Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce, the third largest chamber in Connecticut, for 18 years. Under his leadership, the chamber grew immensely, going from 450 members to 1,820. John demonstrated a remarkable ability to bring people from all walks of life together behind a project. He played an integral role in securing State and Federal funding for the extension of route 72, which will help commuters in central Connecticut and provide a significant boost to merchants in downtown Bristol.

John's tenure with the chamber was the capstone of a lifetime spent serving Bristol. He was the mayor from 1984–1991, where he was elected to four terms. Before being elected mayor, he

was a cop for the Bristol Police Department. He has served as secretary of the Bristol Boys and Girls Club and as treasurer of the Metro Chambers of Commerce organization, which is composed of the seven largest chambers in Connecticut. He was also chairman of the Chambers Benefit Leadership Council, which pools together businesses from Connecticut and western Massachusetts for the purpose of purchasing health benefits.

Given the deep commitment John has shown for Bristol, it is no surprise that he intends to remain in the Mum City. I couldn't be more thrilled that such a devoted civil leader will still be part of the community. I am sure he will find ways to remain involved.

I extend to John Leone my sincerest thanks and heartfelt best wishes on a well deserved retirement. Connecticut is a better place because of him.●

#### TRIBUTE TO MATTHEW E. PARSONS

● Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, today I pay tribute to Special Agent Matthew E. Parsons of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, NCIS, who is retiring from employment with the Federal Government on December 20, 2008. Special Agent Parsons is retiring after 36 years in law enforcement, with the last 27 years of Federal Government service with NCIS. Of special note and atypical of his peers, he volunteered and recently completed a high risk assignment as the Director of the Strategic Counterintelligence Directorate, Multi-National Force-Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq.

During the course of Special Agent Parsons' career in government service, he rose from a GS-7 to a GS-15 Special Agent. In his final position with NCIS, he was assigned as the Assistant Director for Financial Management & Planning at NCIS Headquarters, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC.

Special Agent Parsons, Federal law enforcement career began August 1981 with the Naval Investigative Service—the precursor of today's NCIS. His first assignment was to Norfolk, VA, at the time when the John Walker, Jr., spy ring was uncovered. During the early stages of the investigation, Special Agent Parsons was assigned as the NIS case agent. In August 1985, he transferred to overseas duty at Yokosuka, Japan, where he continued working in the foreign counterintelligence arena.

In 1988, Special Agent Parsons was transferred to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, MD. While conducting an investigation into a sensitive breach of security, he developed the ground work for future NCIS computer investigations. Special Agent Parsons utilized innovative methods to hone his computer investigative skills which ultimately led to the development of agency capabilities to conduct investigations of hacking, intrusions, and sabotage of U.S. Government computer systems and networks.

In December 1993, due to his outstanding efforts in computer crime investigations he was transferred to NCIS Headquarters to establish a computer crimes department for the agency. Special Agent Parsons and his team, reaching nearly 50 members, developed agency and Department of Navy strategies and capabilities which included immediate reporting requirements upon the slightest indication of a technological or information intrusion. In addition, he and his team worked closely with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Armed Forces Center for Child Protection in the forefront of keeping our Nation's future generation safe from exploitation through child pornography and online predators.

In October 2000, Special Agent Parsons was promoted and transferred to Okinawa, Japan as the Resident Agent-in-Charge. During his tenure in Okinawa he led an office primarily responsible to support U.S. Marine Corps forces and operations throughout the East Asia and Pacific region. He and his team developed a fly-away team concept capable of providing on demand support to operating U.S. Naval forces. This expeditionary team was tested in early October 2002 when a bomb exploded outside a popular restaurant in Zamboanga, Philippines, killing two U.S. military members and injuring 20 others. Within 14 hours of the event, the NCIS Okinawa fly-away team was at the scene providing invaluable criminal and forensic investigative support.

In May 2003, Special Agent Parsons was promoted Special Agent-in-Charge of the NCIS Far East Field Office in Yokosuka, Japan. It was during this assignment that he developed a neighbor-to-neighbor program which forged a bond with the local Japanese community and served as an early warning and indicator of potential criminal or terrorist threats to U.S. military personnel living within the community.

In January 2007, Special Agent Parsons was transferred to NCIS Headquarters where he became the assistant director for financial management and planning. Special Agent Parsons oversaw the agency's strategic planning process, developed financial plans and budget initiatives, and conducted evaluations of office implementation plans and performances.

Demonstrating the extent of his dedication to duty and exceptional character, Special Agent Parsons volunteered for a high risk assignment as the Director of the Multi-National Force-Iraq Strategic Counterintelligence Directorate, SCID, Baghdad, Iraq. Serving in Iraq from December 29, 2007 until June 24, 2008, he led a 109-member joint-service team in a complete strategic refocus of the mission resulting in increased collaboration among assets, increased standardization in reporting, and ultimately better support to the war fighter.

As a testament to his distinguished career, Special Agent Parsons received

several awards including the Meritorious Civilian Services Award, the Department of Defense Global War on Terrorism Civilian Service Medal and the NCIS Expeditionary Medal. Special Agent Parsons also received numerous accolades from senior Navy leadership and published six articles regarding computer crime investigations in professional periodicals.

The Navy, the State of Maryland, and the Nation are lucky to have had the service of such a great Special Agent. He will be sorely missed. I wish him and his family all the best as they embark on the next chapter of their lives. Fair winds and following seas!●

#### CONGRATULATING WILLIAM YUAN

● Mr. SMITH. Madam President, I rise today to congratulate a young man who has not only achieved beyond his years but has also advanced the state of the art of solar power technology. William Yuan of Beaverton, OR, is a seventh grader at Meadow Park Middle School whose achievements are both jaw-dropping and important.

Recently, William earned a \$25,000 scholarship from the Davidson Institute and became a Davidson Fellow for his work in renewable energy research. William's project, "A Highly-Efficient 3-Dimensional Nanotube Solar Cell for Visible and UV Light," featured a novel solar panel that enables light absorption from visible to ultraviolet light. The carbon nanotubes William designed can overcome the barriers of electron movement, doubling the light-electricity conversion efficiency. His optimized design provides 500 times more light absorption than commercially available solar cells and nine times more than the cutting-edge, three-dimensional solar cell.

Given the current energy crisis, everyone must pitch in to reduce our dependence on oil consumption. In Congress and in the private sector, we are working to facilitate advancements in renewable energies. However, we cannot be successful without brilliant minds like William's.

Winning the Davidson scholarship is far from William's only achievement. This year alone, William won second place at the Northwest Science Expo, Best Engineering Project at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and second place at the Oregon Chess for Success State Tournament. The list goes on. Last year, William also received a junior black belt pum certification from the World Taekwondo Headquarters in Seoul, Korea. He has also received a number of awards from various Intel Oregon competitions and First Place in Oregon in the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth Talent Search in both quantitative and verbal sections.

At 12 years old, William is only just getting started. He intends to continue his research in renewable energy and eventually select a major for his college study toward a Ph.D. degree. John F. Kennedy once said: